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**WHITNEY'S REVISED GERMAN
GRAMMAR.**

A Compendious German Grammar. By WILLIAM D. WHITNEY, Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology and Instructor in Modern Languages in Yale College. Sixth Edition, Thoroughly Revised and with New Exercises. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1888. 12mo, pp. xii, 472.

For nearly twenty years PROFESSOR WHITNEY'S German Grammar has been extensively used in the schools and colleges of this country and has been justly accorded a most prominent place among text-books for the study of German. The many excellent qualities of the work are so well known to all teachers of this subject that it seems needless to recount them here. In view of the peculiar advantages, however, which some more recent works doubtless possess, it is but just to say that in our opinion none of these have surpassed their older competitor in general philosophical grasp of the subject and in clearness of presentation. In the greater portion of the book the eminent grammarian, with his thorough knowledge of many other forms of speech, his sound judgment in matters pertaining to the general nature of language, and his sense of proportion, manifests his presence on every page.

According to the author's own words, in the new edition no fundamental changes have been made in the plan or structure of the work. The typography is greatly improved; the new orthography has been introduced, in brackets, beside the old spelling; and an entirely new set of exercises has been prepared, including illustrations of the intricacies of German usage by extracts from the best German authors; these exercises are provided with good vocabularies. In the text of the Grammar, also, a number of additions and minor changes have been made, most of which appear to us as decided improvements.

We confess, however, our regret that PROFESSOR WHITNEY has not thought it best to make use of this opportunity to change the character of his Grammar in certain respects

in which it has certainly remained behind the times. It would seem to us that in a book which has been before the public so many years and has seen and, to a great extent, aided, the powerful impulse given to the study of German within the last ten years, such changes would have been no confession of weakness. It is in the sincere hope that the success of the book may soon justify author and publishers in undertaking a new revision that we point out certain defects which will, we fear, before long seriously impair its usefulness.

It is now quite generally admitted that sound instruction in a modern language can only be given on the basis of a thorough training in the pronunciation. Yet PROFESSOR WHITNEY gives us the same inadequate treatment of this subject that was found in the former editions of his Grammar. In this as well as in other matters it would lead too far to mention in detail all the points in which we must disagree with the author; but it seems to us that not even by a frank and explicit confession could PROFESSOR WHITNEY have expressed more clearly his disregard for certain modern tendencies in philological investigation as well as in language-teaching, than by the literal repetition, from the older editions, of such statements as "Others do not allow it (the *g*) anywhere the precise *ch*-sound, especially not after the hard vowels (*a*, *o*, *u*.) but pronounce it nearly as *k* or as something between a *g* and *k*, or between a *k* and *ch* and so on," statements which can only be read with regret by those who have learned to appreciate the author's work in other lines and believe that what is worth doing at all is worth doing well, whether in the most profound philological investigations or in a mere text-book description of German pronunciation. It is perhaps worth while to point out that the space allotted by PROFESSOR WHITNEY to the chapter on pronunciation is nearly the same as that devoted to the much more accurate and complete treatment in BRANDT'S Grammar.

In regard to the character of illustrative sentences we must seriously differ with our author. We believe that these sentences should be simple in structure and intelligible

in meaning; they ought to present no special difficulties beyond the grammatical principles which they are used to illustrate; on the other hand, they should be attractive, embodying some idea which the student will like to remember together with the dry grammatical facts. Surely, in the vast range of German literature it should not be difficult to find such matter. With the good intention of avoiding the insipid monotony of OLLENDORFF and similar text-book mongers, PROFESSOR WHITNEY has taken nearly all of his sentences from standard works; but torn out of their context these often become nearly as unmeaning and absurd to the uninitiated student as the worst specimens of the above obnoxious class; for example, *mit ihr wandelt wem sie die Weihe lieh* (p. 75); *er schlürft langen Halses* (p. 90); *du der dem Basilisk den Mordblick gab* (p. 163); *jene hat gelebt wenn ich dies Blatt aus meinen Händen gebe* (p. 166); *bräutliches Leinen legen wir dem Thor* (p. 168); *es kostet nichts als die Gemeine sein für alle* (p. 178); *ein Gefühl des Verdienstes diese ganze Höhe auszufüllen* (p. 182); *er legte sich hinter die Tabacksdose* (p. 196), etc. Others do not sound quite as strange but are too far removed from our ordinary range of thought to interest the pupil who does not happen to have read the particular work from which they are taken; for example, *Über Pyrgos und Laranda hatte man die Besitzungen des christlich armenischen Fürsten Leo erreicht* (p. 338); *Wo in der Wildniss alles schwieg vernahm ich das Geräute wieder* (p. 257). Sometimes these sentences are unnecessarily difficult, diverting the pupil's attention from the main point under consideration; for example, where the reciprocal use of the personal pronoun is to be illustrated: *wir hätten uns nie sehen sollen* (p. 65). It also seems to us that one or two complete sentences should be given, rather than a number of disconnected phrases or abrupt clauses like *ausser wer seine Mitschuldigen seien* (p. 197). It would not be just, however, not to state that a considerable portion of the examples are well chosen.

The book does not pretend to be a historical grammar nor a history of the language; historical explanations are, as a rule, given only where they have a decided practical bear-

ing, or are really needed for the explanation of some peculiar form or construction. The author generally succeeds in avoiding the dangerous ground of mere theories (which should have no place in an elementary text-book), and is discreet—if not, at times, non-committal—in his statements, although he ought, perhaps, to be less positive in the assertion that the Swabian was the literary dialect of the Middle-High-German period (p. 271). While we approve, in general, of this limited use of historical material, it seems to us that a practical grammar for colleges should take notice at least of all those forms and constructions which, although now obsolete, occur frequently in the classics of the eighteenth century. On the other hand, the spoken language might well receive a larger share of attention, for while the book may not be intended to teach "German Conversation," yet many texts read in colleges and schools are so full of popular idioms and constructions that the recognition of these in a school-grammar would seem very desirable. In general, more careful discrimination is needed between the various stages and phases of the language. Obsolete forms are not always characterized as such, while forms recognized by long usage are still marked as objectionable. Certainly no one now would think of using plurals like *Flüchte, Dorne, Gaume, Hemder, Jöcher*, (except as a mining term), *Gichten, Giften* (pp. 32-36); or object to the expression *der betreffende Punkt* (p. 184).

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AMERICAN LITERATURE.

A Library of American Literature from the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time. Compiled and Edited by E. C. STEDMAN and ELLEN M. HUTCHINSON. In Ten Volumes. New York: C. L. Webster & Co. 1888.

The careful student of American literary history, to whom obscure fragments and tedious bits of prose and verse are interesting and important because of the place they occupy in the process of national thought or the evolution of style, finds his progress retarded and his researches almost impossible, if he has not